

British Women's Travel Writing, 1780-1840: Bibliographical Reflections

Launched in 2014, the Database of Women's Travel Writing provides full and accurate bibliographical records for all the known books of travel published in Britain and Ireland by women between 1780 and 1840. This article critically and statistically reflects on these 204 titles, the authors who wrote them, and the patterns and trends that they suggest when considered together during a period in which women first gained a firm foothold in a genre traditionally considered men's territory. The database reveals patterns of women writing on the generic borders between scribal and print culture, conforming to and manipulating rhetorical conventions in prefaces and advertisements ("the modesty topos"), while striking a balance between assertions of authorial independence and expressions of gendered reticence. Overall, the database reveals a sharp upward trend in the rate at which women published travel writings during the census dates, with 74 titles appearing in the 1830s compared to five in the 1780s. In considering the bibliographical nuances of women's increasing presence in the travel writing marketplace, this article also poses questions about the insights and limitations of statistical approaches to cultural analysis.

In her *Narrative of a Journey Overland from England to India* (1830) [BTW1054]¹, Anne Katharine Elwood styled herself "the first and only female who has hitherto ventured" on that route.² However, James Hanson's 1820 *Route of Lieutenant-General Sir Miles Nightingall, K.C.B. Overland from India* — although travelling in the opposite direction — inscribes

another claimant, his travelling companion Lady Nightingall, to whom Hanson dedicates the book:

I may safely declare, that much of the delight we experienced during our journey, was derived from the characteristic cheerfulness of your Ladyship's disposition, and the interest which this narrative may possess [. . .] will belong to the consideration, that the fatigues, privations, and even dangers, we encountered [. . .] were endured with unexampled patience and fortitude by a female traveller.³

Florentia Elizabeth (Darell) Nightingall (1777-1863) was the daughter of Sir Lionel Darrell, "first baronet and chairman of the East India Company", and Isabella Tullie.⁴ She married Miles Nightingall on 13 August 1800.⁵ Beyond these few details, little more is known of her, yet for Hanson this "female traveller" becomes the moral centre of his book, woven into the narrative as an uncomplaining presence, if not protagonist, keeping her cool where sailors, soldiers, and other travellers lose theirs. But what records of her travels did Florentia Nightingall leave? Might her journals and letters, like those of many women travellers, remain in archives, unpublished and unknown? The *Database of Women's Travel Writing, 1780-1840*, from which this article draws its insights, captures only that smaller percentage of women who travelled, wrote about their experiences, and published those accounts in books; yet, as Michael Heafford warns, we generalize about travel at our peril when our evidence is based solely on books or even print culture.⁶ Elwood's boast is a case in point.⁷

Nevertheless, the *Database of Women's Travel Writing*, launched at the *New Horizons* conference at Chawton House Library in July 2014, for the first time provides full and accurate bibliographical records for 204 titles – all the known books of travel published in Britain and Ireland by women between 1780 and 1840. This corpus excludes manuscript

accounts and serialized travels published in periodicals, as well as (for the time being) works translated by women and those published abroad, such as Elizabeth Fay's *Original Letters from India; Containing a Narrative of a Journey through Egypt* (Calcutta, 1817). Even with these limitations, however, the database provides a meaningful overview from which we can begin to see the public face of British women's travel writing emerging in its most formative decades.⁸ Some of this material is familiar from the pioneering surveys of Betty Hagglund, Zoe Kinsley, Katherine Turner, and Kathryn Walchester, as well as the many other studies and anthologies that have considered women's travel writing in the period covered by the database.⁹ Yet many of the writers and their books are less known, and research towards the database has turned up ghost titles, cataloguing errors, and misattributions that have hitherto clouded the textual landscape.

Like its parent project, *British Travel Writing 1780-1840*, which aims to describe all travel books produced in the period, the database principally defines and delimits its corpus in terms of genre (narratives, guidebooks, illustrated letterpress plate books, topographical descriptions, and collections); witness (accounts derived from actual tours); and place of publication (Britain and Ireland). Travel novels, poetry, and other forms of fiction have generally been excluded, although an exception has been made for travel storybooks for children that are based on an author's actual tour or contain abridgements of third-party tours (de facto collections). Excluded too are geographical works, directories and gazetteers, histories, memoirs, and many other genres that share some features with travel writing (known for its generic indeterminacy), but do not sufficiently address the desiderata of genre, witness, and place.¹⁰ While the census dates of 1780-1840 are pragmatic for the larger *British Travel Writing* project, for the *Database of Women's Travel Writing* they coincide with the period in which women began to publish regularly and at an increasing rate. In the century previous, only ten books of travel by women appeared in print, the first being a translation of

Marie-Catherine, Madame d'Aulnoy's *Travels in Spain* (1691) followed by Elizabeth Justice's *Voyage to Russia* in 1739. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's well-known *Turkish Embassy Letters* (published as *Letters [. . .] Written, during her Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa*), the fourth in sequence, appeared in 1763 and preceded the remaining six titles which all were published in the 1770s.¹¹ What follows, then, in this article, are some initial reflections on the titles that currently comprise the database, the authors who wrote them, and the patterns and trends that they suggest when considered together.

Although published travel books are the starting point for the database and the analysis here, the dividing line between scribal and print culture is not so clear. Zoe Kinsley has argued persuasively that it has been overstated, with women's travelogues in manuscript often structured like printed books, referring intertextually to them, and showing signs of a similar consciousness of readership.¹² The obverse is true, too; women's published travel books frequently refer back to their status as manuscripts. For example, Hannah Ann Bullock's *History of the Isle of Man* (1816) [BTW1033] frames its introduction as a letter "To Mrs. —", allowing private communication to stand in for the more usual direct address to the reading public in other travel writing prefaces and introductions (Bullock uses her rhetorical performance to explain how a collection intended "for your sole amusement and information" haphazardly shifted to more public ends as a result of local political circumstances).¹³ Similarly, Marianne Colston's dedication to her *Journal of a Tour in France, Switzerland and Italy* (1823) [BTW1040] uses a script-like typeface to reinforce affective ties potentially lost in the translation of the manuscript journal to book [**Figure 1**]. Maria Nugent's *Journal of a Voyage to and Residence in India* (1839) [BTW1125] and her *A Journal of a Voyage to, and Residence in, the Island of Jamaica from 1801 to 1805* (1839) [BTW1124], both privately published five years after the author's death, include a prefatory "Sonnet, on Reading the Journals of Lady Nugent" by Richard Alfred Davenport (1776/7-

1852), beginning, “Thou pure and gentle Spirit! as I trace, / Th’ unstudied page that pictures forth thy mind”.¹⁴ Without any other preliminary matter, the sonnet is not only a personal tribute to the dead, but another gesture at the intimacy of reading and reproducing raw material.

Like Nugent’s two books, at least nine others in the database are printed for private circulation, including Harriet Gunn’s *Letters Written during a Four Days’ Tour in Holland* (Norwich 1834) [BTW1075], apparently edited and published without her knowledge by her self-styled “fond Father”, Dawson Turner (1775-1858), for circulation among extended family and friends.¹⁵ The Turner household was something of a literary collective, in which Turner’s wife, sons, and daughters helped in his antiquarian and botanical research, and as extra-illustrators for his growing collection of rare books and manuscripts. Turner’s illustrated *Account of a Tour in Normandy* (2 vols., 1820), at present being considered for inclusion in the database, appears to have been a collaboration with his wife, Mary Turner, at least two of his daughters, and the artist John Sell Cotman, based in part on an 1818 family tour of Normandy in Cotman’s company, and drawing liberally on the journals and letters of all the party, possibly including Harriet (whose marriage to the Reverend John Gunn in 1830 did not, evidently, reduce Dawson Turner’s sense of proprietorship over her writings).¹⁶

Marketed volumes, for their part, are often self-consciously packaged as concentric extensions of the domestic sphere; as the anonymous author of *A Tour in the Isle of Wight* (1822) [BTW1006] puts it in her carefully deferential address “To the Reader”:

The Tour [. . .] was written without any idea of its ever being perused, save by the partner of it; but having been lent to a friend, whose partiality to the author led him to attach a value to it, she was induced to have a few copies distributed

among those whom friendship or acquaintance might render willing to receive a memorial of the respect and regard of the Author.¹⁷

Even the friend who sanctions the distribution of further copies does so out of personal regard for the author rather than from a proper evaluation of her performance, or so the well-worn argument goes, and should a stranger outside the family circle read the preface, she or he can be reassured that the author does not write for money or fame, but to provide pleasure and useful instruction for friends. The rhetorical strategy here, repeated in the prefaces of both men and women in many examples of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century travel writing, has its roots in classical rhetoric where expressions of “reluctance, humility, and modesty” are “designed to secure credibility and capture the benevolent attention of the audience”.¹⁸ For Colston, the studied phrasing of this “modesty topos”, even by the early 1820s, had become conventional enough to ironize, if not subvert. “‘Request of friends,’—‘demand for multiplied copies,’ impossible to be supplied in manuscript”, she writes in her own preface, “—these pleas [. . .] are worn so threadbare”: “A truce then to excuses and apologies, which serve only to aggravate demerit”.¹⁹ Colston goes on, nevertheless, to express her own “conviction of the manifold deficiencies of this journal”,²⁰ finding mitigation only in the authenticity of her observations and the utility and pleasure she hoped to provide others through them; in short, she critiques the rhetorical strategy even as she achieves its ends through other rhetorical means.

The modesty topos was not easily dismissed and those who call attention to it, like Colston, keep its function intact. The anonymous author of *Notes of a Journey in the North of Ireland* (1828) [BTW1004] begins her prefatory remarks by apologising for apologising: “The apology of yielding to the solicitation of friends has of late become so hackneyed a vehicle [. . .], that the Writer of the following pages is almost ashamed to resort to so

commonplace an introduction of them”.²¹ She goes on to relate how the encouragement of a “few friends” convinced her to persevere in writing, how “time and persuasion” overcame her reluctance to publish, how if “these pages afford a leisure hour’s amusement [. . .] the Writer’s expectation will be fully answered”.²² Almost word for word, this last claim is echoed in Marianne Postans’s *Cutch; or, Random Sketches, Taken during a Residence in One of the Northern Provinces of Western India* (1839) [BTW1138]. Others wryly turned gendered self-consciousness against itself, displaying before their public the knowing eye of the professional writer. As Catherine Sinclair writes in *Hill and Valley, or Hours in England and Wales* (1838) [BTW1160], after debunking the unstudied pretensions of “Rough Notes”, “Slight Sketches”, and “Private Diaries”: “The following very miscellaneous journal, accordingly, was written, like all travels, ‘merely for private circulation’”.²³

Notwithstanding appeals to the porosity between the personal and public, in what sense was travel writing, as Kinsley states, “a form of literary production which [. . .] sanctioned female participation”?²⁴ If we remove scribal circulation from this equation and consider participation in book culture on its own, the numbers tell a different – although not easily interpretable – story. In the years 1780 to 1840 around 5,000 travel books were published by around 3,000 authors, but of those only 204 can be identified as produced by 146 women. Of these titles, 168 can be classified as narratives, as opposed to collections, guidebooks, letterpress plate books, and topographical descriptions. Whether we consider narratives specifically, or travel writings in the aggregate, the fact remains that women accounted for only around 5% of travel books published in Britain and Ireland during this period (a 20 to 1 ratio of men to women). Compare this to women’s presence as writers of poetry or novels. According to William St Clair’s tabulation, J.R. de J. Jackson enumerates 400 women actively publishing poetry between 1789 and 1832 (a figure that St Clair extrapolates as a 5 or 6 to 1 ratio of men to women).²⁵ More recently, Peter Garside has

charted the increasing dominance of women authors of new novels from the 1780s to the 1810s when “female titles outmatch male ones by more than two-to-one in 1810 (51/22), 1813 (39/19), and 1814 (41/17)”.²⁶ In this context, Stephen Behrendt’s view that “we no longer need to be reminded that many women were active on the literary scene [. . .] during [. . .] the Romantic period”²⁷ belies the fact that we do need to be reminded that not all genres attracted equal activity. Travel writing as literary production may have sanctioned female participation but was less apt to do so the closer women approached the commercial world of book publishing.²⁸

The statistics in this instance—and many of the examples cited above—reinforce critical investigations into the gendering of domesticity, mobility, and, more recently, knowledge-work (to borrow Alan Liu’s phrase), in which women are shown to be discursively positioned outside the enlightenment project.²⁹ The episteme, according to Yaël Schlick and Katherine Turner before her, is summed up by Rousseau’s *Emile* (1762), a text that concludes with two contrasting sections, “Sophie ou la femme” and “Des Voyages”, as if womanhood and travel were recognizably antithetical conditions.³⁰ Gary Kelly’s assessment of the opportunities authorship nevertheless provided women – while preserving “the actual or notional confines of domestic life”³¹ – comes up against the problem of writing about a mode of experience gendered as unfeminine. Kelly’s argument that Helen Maria Williams manages to feminize the French Revolution “through the use of the familiar letter, well established as a predominately feminine discourse”,³² however, might lead one to expect more acceptance of women’s travel writing than we find and more evidence of the epistolary being a favoured genre choice, whereas the database shows 116 non-epistolary compared to 52 epistolary travelogues. Williams’s initial success, to be sure, had something to do with manipulation of genre and gender expectations, an exploitation of the discourse of sensibility coupled with the use of travel writing for history-on-the-spot-and-in-the-making reportage of

the Revolutionary experiment in France.³³ In the post-Napoleonic environment, Lady Morgan's *France* (1817) [BTW1116] was likewise an intervention in post-revolutionary historiography in the manner of Williams, with multiple editions and spinoffs in English and in French. The book also attests to Morgan's unflinching manipulation of gendered criticism for her own commercial ends. Her preface wittily taunts the *Quarterly Review* for levelling its "malignant scurrility" at a "young and unprotected female" and goes on to claim boldly that the "slander [. . .] fell hurtless" on an author whose achievements had been sanctioned by public applause.³⁴ This achieved the desired result in John Wilson Croker's vicious *Quarterly Review* attack on *France*, accusing Morgan of "Jacobinism", "Licentiousness", and "Impiety", which she then kept green by incorporating Croker unflatteringly into her next novel, *Florence Macarthy: An Irish Tale* (1818).³⁵

Although Williams's unapologetic and Morgan's adversarial stances were on the whole exceptional, they were by no means unique. Ann Plumptre, for example, used her debut travel book, *A Narrative of a Three Years' Residence in France* (1810) [BTW1136], to take to task the pretence of on-the-spot-letter-writing as displayed in other travel accounts, and then to assert the reasons why her book has more accuracy and novelty than others of the same ilk; while her second travel book, *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland* (1817) [BTW1137], puts to rest the ghost of *Emile* with her unyielding prefatory assertion, "I now venture again to appear before [the public] in the character of a Traveller".³⁶ Other writers instead argued for particular strengths in a woman's perspective. Mary Holderness's *Notes Relating to the Manners and Customs of the Crim Tatars* (1821) [BTW1089] makes the case "that, as a resident and a female, I possessed advantages for acquiring information superior to those of the passing traveller".³⁷ In *The Backwoods of Canada* (1836) [BTW1175], Catharine Parr Strickland notes that "a woman's pen alone can describe half that is requisite to be told of the internal management of a domicile in the backwoods", and directed her writings to "the

female part of the emigrant's family".³⁸ Anne Katharine Elwood, already mentioned, also recognized that female reading audiences were becoming an important engine for the acceptance of travel writing by women, arguing that "women naturally take a lively interest in what concerns their own sex".³⁹

Nevertheless, the majority of women represented in the database were conscious of the pitfalls of appearing too boldly in print and many, as we have seen, took evasive action in prefaces, introductions, notes to readers, advertisements or by other paratextual means. Other writers approached the genre in the guise of less contentious authorial roles, sharing responsibility as co-authors or assuming supporting roles as contributors, editors, illustrators, or letterpress writers, or recasting popular travel accounts into moral and instructional dialogues for children. Of 51 entries in the dataset (25% of the total), 19 are collaborations with male writers, often family members (and most often spouses);⁴⁰ nine represent women who took on editorial roles redacting travels into digests and dialogues for children;⁴¹ and 15 more comprise other editorial roles, including women who presided over posthumous works or took up the role of travel historian for loved ones. Examples of the latter tendency include Mary Ann Parker's *Voyage Round the World, in the Gorgon Man of War* (1795), published "for the advantage of a numerous family"⁴²; Keturah Jeffreys's *Widowed Missionary's Journal* (1827), recounting the travels she undertook with her late husband, the Rev. John Jeffreys of the London Missionary Society, who died on a voyage between Madagascar and Mauritius; and also the anonymous *A Young Englishman's First Residence in Jamaica. By a Widow* [1836], purporting to be "extracts of letters [. . .] from a beloved brother".⁴³ In the category of editors, too, are authors such as Maria Graham or Elizabeth Broughton, whose "editions" are substantially original works.⁴⁴ Finally, eight titles, including Harriet Gunn's already mentioned, were brought forth into print by others, usually male relatives, including several posthumous memorials.⁴⁵

At times, generic acknowledgements of friends and family as catalysts for appearing in print give way to women authors' more specific notes on debts to established (male) literary professionals. Although Ann Radcliffe is rarely catalogued other than as the sole author of her *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794* (1795), she herself makes the case for the silent presence of her husband, William Radcliffe, in an untitled authorial preface inserted between the title page and table of contents. There she argues that her husband was not only her travelling companion, the plural subject of the account, but also that the account itself was dependant on their "mutual observation" (the fact that William was a journalist known for his prodigious memory in reporting on Parliamentary affairs lends credence to this claim). She credits him too with majority input in places where "the oeconomical and political conditions of countries are touched upon". Overall, the apology bespeaks sensitivity to genre as much as gender norms, an attempt to balance her renown as a novelist against the exigencies for appearing in print as a travel writer: "The title page would, therefore, would have contained the joint names of her husband and herself, if this mode of appearing before the public [. . .] had not seemed liable to the imputation of a design to attract attention by extraordinary novelty".⁴⁶ Later writers who attempt to balance authorial independence with gendered reticence include the otherwise strident Mary Southall, author of *A Description of Malvern* (1822), who thanks her publisher George Nicholson (1760-1825; *ODNB*), "the author of the 'Cambrian Traveller's Guide,' [1808] for his friendly revisal of my manuscript"⁴⁷; and Anna Eliza Bray, who credits the plan of her *A Description of the Part of Devonshire Bordering on the Tamar and the Tavy* (1836) to Robert Southey and, as the full title page identifies, addresses the letters that comprise the book to him.

For many female authors, the travel book was a first, sometimes last, foray into print, but many others had established or were establishing reputations as novelists, poets, scientific and miscellaneous writers. Among the novelists, we find Anna Bray, Elizabeth Helme,

Catherine Hutton, Lady Morgan, Ann Radcliffe, Mary Shelley, Catherine Sinclair, Elizabeth Spence, Elizabeth Strutt, and Frances Trollope; the poets include Marianne Baillie, Louisa Costello, Sophie Dixon, Esther Lucie Domeier, Jane Harvey, Maria Riddell, Louisa Twamley (later Meredith), Susanna Watts, and Helen Maria Williams; and in other categories, the naturalist Sara Bowdich, known for her serialization *The Fresh Water Fishes of Great Britain* (1828-1837) and for her biography of Cuvier; the Countess of Blessington, whose writings ranged from travel to novel to biography; the prolific Lady Henrietta Chatterton who published fiction, biography, travel, and devotional writing; Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, who turned to travel writing to earn her livelihood, but continued writing in fields such as aesthetics and theology; and of course the philosopher, feminist, and educationalist Mary Wollstonecraft. Several authors were themselves in the book trade: Catherine Kearsley succeeded her husband, the radical publisher George Kearsley, after his death in 1790; Mary Jane Godwin, second wife of William Godwin, ran with him a children's bookshop after 1807 (M. J. Godwin & Co.); with her husband, John, Mary Southall was co-proprietor of "Library-House", a circulating library and bazaar constructed in Malvern after 1818; and Jane Harvey ran a circulating library in Tynemouth. Together, these literary professionals make up 62 of the total identified authors (or around 43%).

The most productive female travel writers of the period (some of whom earned substantial reputations from their travel writings specifically) include Maria Graham, Lady Morgan, Julia Pardoe, Emma Roberts, Catherine Sinclair, Elizabeth Spence, Mariana Starke, Frances Trollope, and Helen Maria Williams [see **Table 1**]. To these names, we might add two others whose contributions to the genre go beyond the limits of the dataset: Louisa Costello (six books, 1840-1846); and Louisa Twamley Meredith (four books, 1839-1852). The earliest and most prolific of those within the census dates, however, is Williams, whose popular travel narrative, *Letters from France* (1790) [BTW1196], was followed by sequels

and spinoffs which, aside from *A Tour is Switzerland* (1798) [BTW1198], now seem more akin to political journalism by a resident foreigner than the miscellaneous reportage and mobility more usually associated with travel writing. Nevertheless, the reputation Williams earned for these writings eclipsed her reputation as a poet, novelist, and, to some extent, translator, although her popular translation of Alexander von Humboldt's *Personal Narrative of Travels to the Equinoctial Regions of the New Continent* (7 vols., 1814-1829) also ensured that her name would be closely linked with travel writing throughout the nineteenth century. There is nothing tangential to the genre about the writings of Maria Graham, however, the second most prolific producer of travel writing on the list. As Carl Thompson has observed, Graham was the first women to build a career around travel writing; her narratives and an edition ranged from Brazil and Chile to India, from Rome to the Sandwich Islands, and she is in fact the only woman in the census period to publish on South America.⁴⁸

Overall, the database reveals a sharp upward trend in the rate at which women published travel writings, with just five new titles published in the 1780s contrasted to 74 in the 1830s [**Table 2** and **Figure 2**]. The 1780s titles are bunched in three years – 1783 (one title), 1785 (two), and 1789 (two) – but from 1789 onwards women contributed annually to the travel writing market, with the exception of 1818. That anomaly belies the fact that, with the reopening of the continent at the end of the Napoleonic wars, women were among those who capitalized on new opportunities for accounts of the countries of the Grand Tour, that former bastion of male privilege. In 1817, there were six titles by women – two more than in 1816 and the highest number in a single year to that date. Three of these covered French regions (Lady Morgan, Mary Shelley, and Frances Vaux) and one Belgium (Charlotte Eaton). In 1820, a new high of eight titles by women appeared, seven of them concerning France and Italy. From this watershed, women produced an average of 4.6 new titles per year until 1835 when another step change occurred. 14 titles that year were followed by ten the next with

continued high yields until 1840, an average of 10.6 per year. By the 1830s women were writing on all parts of the world, with titles concerning regions in India, North America, and the Caribbean being an important factor in women's strong showing in these years. The expectation that women somehow represent domesticity in their writings did not therefore translate of necessity into their publishing accounts of the home tour, and there is surprisingly little published writing by women on Ireland (nine titles), Scotland (eight), and Wales (eight) compared to what one might expect in a larger data sample from the period [**Table 3**].

How are we to interpret these statistics and the trends they seem to be revealing? Why, for example, did the spike in women's accounts of more far-flung regions begin in the 1830s? One can speculate that Frances Trollope's controversial and popular (though negative) assessment of the United States, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) [BTW1184], may have provoked many of the North American travel writings thereafter that come to the former colony's defence, but what of those accounts of India (or the Caribbean)? Might, rather, Elwood's boast at being the first woman to travel overland to India be read in a different way; that is, as a sign of a new acceptance among the reviewers and reading public of the woman-as-traveller, opening up the market to women who travelled well beyond the beaten track of Europe? In a world of commercial publishing, might a woman's perspective on a particular region come to be, because of its relative scarcity, a selling point in travel writing?

In speculations such as these and with the scaling in and scaling out made possibly by database interrogation, things often seem less rather than more clear. Consider the sizeable 41% of titles that treat European destinations other than Great Britain and Ireland, where France is the country of greatest interest, followed with decreasing emphasis by other states of the Grand Tour—Italy, Switzerland, and Germany respectively. In the fifteen years from 1815 to 1829, women produced a consistent 9.5% of the total number of titles treating

France, Italy, and Switzerland [**Table 4**]. When we zoom in, however, we see that this masks a spike in the number of writings on these regions between 1820 and 1824, compared with below average performance in the five-year periods before and after. Is this acceptable statistical variation or the sign of cultural shifts in attitudes to and acceptance of women's travel writing? Might the dip in the number of women travel authors in the five-year period after 1825 correlate with the fiscal crisis of that year, signalling perhaps a new (albeit brief) conservatism in the commissioning of titles? What is the database trying to tell us?

At times the database delivers up figures that are suggestive rather than definitive, without the larger dataset of men's and women's travel writing in place. It is perhaps not surprising that 170 of the titles, for example, were published in London, with the market share divided among a handful of major publishers, including Longman, John Murray, Colburn, Robinson, and Saunders & Otley [see **Table 5**]. However, of the 76 remaining publishers operating in 24 other cities, only five publishers were based in Edinburgh, the centre of the Scottish publishing trade, accounting for ten titles by six authors (all of which were shared with London and regional publishers).⁴⁹ Do these figures reflect the imbrication of London and Edinburgh publishing and distribution, or might there be genre, or even gender exclusions at work as well? Or, take the question of format, as a final example. In *The Reading Nation*, William St Clair claims that "Travel books often appeared first in 4to, and only if commercial interest was high, were they reprinted in 8vo".⁵⁰ Yet the database reveals that only 18 of the 149 narratives appeared first in quarto. St. Clair's appendix on Travels and Voyages lists no books of travel by women, so do we conclude that women writers were less likely to publish in quarto or that St. Clair's assessment needs to consider a wider and more up-to-date range of data?

Questions like these drift towards those being currently asked about Big Data, as statistical analysis plays an increasing role in shaping the contours of literary history. In his

recent intervention in this debate, *Distant Reading* (2013), Franco Moretti asks how we make sense of, say, 7,000 texts – more than any one person can read or remember with any degree of thoroughness or accuracy. What new methodologies must be applied and how can strategies of distant reading help inform close reading? With a slight tweak, substituting “database” for “archive”, let me quote Morretti:

You enter the [database], and the usual coordinates disappear; all you can see are swarms of hybrids and oddities, for which the categories of literary taxonomy offer very little help. It’s fascinating, to feel so lost in a universe one didn’t even know existed; but it’s hard to extract a rational picture from this Walpurgisnacht of discordant voices. And then [. . .] to make matters worse [. . .] working with large quantities, the average becomes an inevitable presence [. . .] Too much polyphony, and too much monotony: it’s the Scylla and Charybdis of digital humanities. The day we establish an intelligible relationship between the two, a new literary landscape will come into being.⁵¹

Whether the *British Travel Writing* project as a whole can help bring about this new literary landscape remains to be seen, but its smaller, more manageable subset, the *Database of Women’s Travel Writing*, helps us see more clearly how women inserted themselves into a genre that previously had been almost exclusively male territory, even as they explored the boundaries between scribal and print culture and challenged rhetorical forms of self-presentation. Women extended the genre, too, to include storybook travelogues and guides intended for children and young readers, an area on which travel writing research remains under-developed. The database also calls attention to the many forms of collaboration, from co- and group-authorship to creative editing, redacting, abridging, and borrowing from the

works of others, and further research is needed to uncover the negotiations between the sometimes competing authorial, not to mention commercial, interests at work in the production of such travel writings. The database, of course, is open to additional interrogations and provides new information on anonymity, pseudonymity, and named authorship; on printers and publishers; on dedications and epigraphs; and on reviews, to name some of the more obvious features. But above all, it is hoped, the database will allow scholars of women's travel writing, for the first time perhaps, to recognize, quantify, and describe trends that reinforce or problematize the conclusions we are tempted to draw from smaller samples.

¹ The unique identifiers within square brackets here and throughout this article refer to the record numbers for text entries found in Benjamin Colbert, *A Database of Women's Travel Writing, 1780-1840*, designer Movable Type Ltd. <www.wlv.ac.uk/btw>.

² Anne Katharine Curteis Elwood, *Narrative of a Journey Overland from England, by the Continent of Europe, Egypt, and the Red Sea, to India; Including a Residence There, and Voyage Home in the Years 1825, 26, 27, and 28*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1830), 1: vi.

³ James Hanson, *Route of Lieutenant-General Sir Miles Nightingall, K.C.B. Overland from India. In a Series of Letters from Captain Hanson, Late Assistant Quarter-Master-General with the Field Army of the Madras Establishment* (London: Printed for T. Baker, Finsbury-Place. 1820), vii-viii.

⁴ H. M. Chichester, "Nightingall, Sir Miles (1768–1829)", rev. James Falkner, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford UP, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20195>, accessed 7 April 2015].

⁵ *Lady's Magazine* 31 (Aug. 1800): 456.

⁶ Michael Heafford, "Between Grand Tour and Tourism: British Travellers to Switzerland in a Period of Transition, 1814-1860", *Journal for Transport History* 27.1 (2006): 25-47.

Heafford argues for the use of statistical data derived from hotel registers on the continental tour as a better indicator of traveller profiles and trends than published accounts of such travels.

⁷ See Deborah Manley, "Elwood, Anne Katharine (1796–1873)", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford UP, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48643>, accessed 7 April 2015]. Manley notes that "Eliza Fay had preceded her [on the overland route to India], via Suez, in 1779".

⁸ The dataset is subject to periodic review as new research becomes available. Since July 2014, three entries have been deleted (one title newly identified as by a male author; one title omitted as fiction; one title published outside Britain/Ireland), while nine others have been added. At present, BTW1022 and BTW1126 are being reviewed for possible deletion (see notes published under those entries online). In future, the database will be augmented by travel writings translated by women as well as those published by British women abroad.

⁹ See Berry Hagglund, *Tourists and Travellers: Women's Non-Fictional Writing about Scotland, 1770-1830* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010); Zoe Kinsley, *Women Writing the Home Tour, 1682-1812* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender and National Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Kathryn Walchester, *"Our Own Fair Italy": Nineteenth-Century Women's Travel Writing and Italy 1800-1844* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007). See also *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing*, ed. Shirley Foster and Sara Mills (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2002).

¹⁰ For a fuller account of inclusions and exclusions, see “About DWTW”, <<http://www4.wlv.ac.uk/btw/about>> [7 April 2015]. For an earlier report and analysis of the project, see also Benjamin Colbert, “*Bibliography of British Travel Writing, 1780–1840: The European Tour, 1814–1818 (excluding Britain and Ireland)*”, *Cardiff Corvey: Reading the Romantic Text* 13 (Winter 2004). Online: <http://www.cf.ac.uk/encap/corvey/articles/cc13_n01.html> [April 2015].

¹¹ The ten pre-1780 books are: Marie-Catherine d’Aulnoy, *The Ingenious and Diverting Letters of the Lady — Travels into Spain* (London: Printed for Samuel Crouch, 1691); Elizabeth Justice, *A Voyage to Russia* (York: Printed by Thomas Gent, 1739); Lady Margaret Pennyman, *Miscellanies in Prose and Verse, by the Honourable Lady Margaret Pennyman. Containing, I. Her Late Journey to Paris* (London: Printed for E. Curll, 1740); Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M—y W---y M----e: Written, during her Travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa*, 3 vols. (London: Printed for T. Becket and P. A. De Hondt, 1763); Marie Anne (LePage) Fiquet DuBoccage, *Letters Concerning England, Holland and Italy [. . .] Written during Her Travels in Those Countries*, trans. fr. French, 2 vols. (London: Printed for E. and C. Dilly, 1770); Elizabeth Percy, Duchess of Northumberland, *A Short Tour Made in the Year One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy One* (London: Printed in the Year MDCCLXXV [1775]); Anne Miller, *Letters from Italy [. . .] in the Years MDCCLXX and MDCCLXXI*, 3 vols. (London, 1776); Jane Vigor, *Letters from a Lady, Who Resided Some Years in Russia, to Her Friend at Ballyshannon* (London, 1776); Mary Ann Hanway, *A Journey to the Highlands of Scotland [. . .] By a Lady* (London, [1776?]); Jemima Kindersley, *Letters from the Island of Teneriffe, Brazil, the Cape of Good Hope, and the East Indies* (London: Printed for J. Nourse, 1777).

¹² Kinsley, esp. 38–46ff.

¹³ Hannah Ann Bullock, *History of the Isle of Man, with a Comparative View of the Past and Present State of Society and Manners; Containing also Biographical Anecdotes of Eminent Persons Connected with that Island* (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1816), [v].

¹⁴ Richard Alfred Davenport, “Sonnet, on Reading the Journals of Lady Nugent”, in Maria Nugent, *A Journal from the Year 1811 till the Year 1815, Including a Voyage to and Residence in India, with a Tour to the North-Western Parts of the British Possessions in that Country, under the Bengal Government* (London, 1839), [xiii]; and in Maria Nugent, *A Journal of a Voyage to, and Residence in, the Island of Jamaica from 1801 to 1805*, 2 vols. (London, 1839), 1: [iii]. The sonnet is unsigned in *Residence in India*, but Davenport’s name is printed below it in *Residence in, the Island of Jamaica*.

¹⁵ Harriet Gunn, *Letters Written during a Four Days’ Tour in Holland, in the Summer of 1834*, ([Norwich]: Not Published, 1834), vi: “To my intention, I have made no one privy: my Daughter herself will, more than any other person, be surprised to see her letters in print; and, were she aware of what I contemplate, I am sure that, far from desiring or countenancing a step of the kind, she would be the first to interpose her veto. The vanity therefore, if there be vanity in the case, is wholly to be ascribed to a justly fond father”.

¹⁶ For other texts straddling print and scribal cultures, see Mary Douglas, *Notes of a Journey from Berne to England, through France. Made in the Year 1796. By M. D.* [London, 1797], for private circulation; Maria (Skinner), Lady Nugent, *A Journal from the Year 1811 till the Year 1815, Including a Voyage to and Residence in India, with a Tour to the North-Western Parts of the British Possessions in that Country, under the Bengal Government* (London, 1839); Maria (Skinner), Lady Nugent, *A Journal of a Voyage to, and Residence in, the Island of Jamaica from 1801 to 1805, and of Subsequent Events in England from 1805 to 1811*

(London, 1839); Henrietta Elizabeth Molyneux Phillipps, *Fragment of a Tour* ([Middle Hall, 1835]) [privately printed].

¹⁷ *A Tour in the Isle of Wight, in the Autumn of 1820. Currento Calamo* (London: Printed by A. and R. Spottiswoode, 1822).

¹⁸ Innes M. Keighren, Charles W. J. Withers, and Bill Bell, *Travels into Print: Exploration, Writing, and Publishing with John Murray, 1773-1859* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 104. See 102-106 for a full discussion of the “modesty topos”.

¹⁹ Mariane Colston, *Journal of a Tour in France, Switzerland, and Italy, during the Years 1819, 20, and 21. Illustrated by Fifty Lithographic Prints, from Original Drawings, Taken in Italy, the Alps, and the Pyrenees*, 2 vols. (London: Printed for G. and W. B. Whittaker, 1823.), 1: vii-viii.

²⁰ Colston, ix.

²¹ *Notes of a Journey in the North of Ireland, in the Summer of 1827* (London: Printed by Baldwin and Cradock and Simpkin and Marshall, 1828), iii.

²² *Notes of a Journey in the North of Ireland*, v.

²³ Catherine Sinclair, *Hill and Valley, or Hours in England and Wales* (Edinburgh: William Whyte and Co., 1838), v.

²⁴ Kinsley, 82.

²⁵ William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 172n73. St Clair also points out that women were less visible as novelists because novels tended to be listed by title, and most published anonymously (173-74).

²⁶ Peter Garside, “Authorship”, *The Oxford History of the Novel in English*, vol. 2: *English and British Fiction 1750—1820*, ed. Peter Garside and Karen O’Brien (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2015), 46. See also P.D. Garside, J.E. Belanger, and S.A. Ragaz, *British Fiction, 1800—1829*:

A Database of Production, Circulation & Reception, designer A.A. Mandal

<<http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk>>.

²⁷ Stephen Behrendt, *British Women Poets and the Romantic Writing Community* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2009), 7.

²⁸ Though beyond the scope of this article and the database more generally, the extent to which women travel writers contributed serialised travel accounts in the periodical press, often anonymously, still needs to be taken into account.

²⁹ See Walchester, 24-34. For “knowledge work”, see Alan Liu, *The Laws of Cool: Knowledge Work and the Culture of Information* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

³⁰ Yaël Schlick, *Feminism and the Politics of Travel after the Enlightenment* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2012), 20; Katherine Turner, *British Travel Writers in Europe 1750-1800: Authorship, Gender and National Identity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), 137-38.

³¹ Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 9.

³² Kelly, 38.

³³ See Deborah Kennedy, *Helen Maria Williams and the Age of Revolution* (Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2002), 68-75.

³⁴ Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, *France (1817), Volume 1*, in *Women’s Travel Writing in Post-Napoleonic France*, ed. Benjamin Colbert, vol. 5 (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), viii.

³⁵ See Benjamin Colbert, “General Introduction”, *Women’s Travel Writing in Post-Napoleonic France*, vol. 5.

³⁶ Anne Plumptre, *A Narrative of a Three Years’ Residence in France, Principally in the Southern Departments, from the Year 1802 to 1805* (London: Printed for J. Mawman, 1810),

vi-vii; Anne Plumptre, *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland during the Summer of 1814, and that of 1815* (London: Printed for Henry Colburn, 1817), v.

³⁷ Mary Holderness, *Notes Relating to the Manners and Customs of the Crim Tatars; Written during a Four Years' Residence among that People* (London: John Warren, 1821), vi.

³⁸ Catharine Parr Strickland, *The Backwoods of Canada: Being Letters from the Wife of an Emigrant Officer, Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British America* (London: Charles Knight, 1836), 1.

³⁹ Elwood, *Narrative of a Journey Overland*, vi.

⁴⁰ For collaborations, see: BTW1017 (Elizabeth Frances Batty [illus.] and Anon [letterpress; implied male]; BTW1018 (Sara Belzoni [contrib.] and Giovanni Belzoni [main author]); BTW1203 (Blake family; incl. Henry, Martha, and Anne [Attersol]); BTW1026 (Sara Bowditch [contrib.] and Thomas Edward Bowdich [main author]); BTW1029 (Anna Bray [main author] with Charles Stothard); BTW1034 (Letitia Byrne [illus.] with Paul Amsinck [letterpress]); BTW1050 (Mary Douglas intended to accompany a work of the same title by her husband, Andrew Douglas); BTW1051 (Howard Dudley [main author] and M. E. Dudley [contrib. of poems]); BTW1058 (Frederika Freygang and Wilhelm von Freygang); BTW1178 (Elizabeth Gower [illus.] and various [letterpress]); BTW1088 (Barbara Hofland [letterpress] and W. B. Cooke [illus.]); BTW1116, 1117 (Lady Morgan [main author] and Sir Charles Morgan [contrib.]); BTW1142 (Ann Radcliffe [main author] and William Radcliffe [contrib.]); BTW1143 (Emma Reeve [letterpress] with Thomas Allom [illus.]); BTW1145 (Emma Roberts [letterpress] and various [illus.]); BTW1159 (Mary Shelley and Percy Shelley); BTW1193 (Emily Elizabeth Ward [illus.] with John Pye [engr.]); BTW1214 (Martha Yeardley with John Yeardley).

⁴¹ For editors (juvenile literature), see: BTW1003 (Anon, for various); BTW1009 (Lucy Atkins, for Belzoni); BTW1010 (Atkins, for various); BTW1011 (Atkins, for Cook, Ellis,

Park etc.); BTW1151 (Jane Gardiner, for various); BTW1084, 1086, 1087 (Barbara Hofland, for various); BTW1180 (Emily Taylor, for various).

⁴² Mary Ann Parker, *A Voyage round the World, in the Gorgon Man of War: Captain John Parker. Performed and Written by His Widow; for the Advantage of a Numerous Family* (London: Printed by John Nichols, 1795), [t.p.]; see also Parker's preface, v-vii.

⁴³ *A Young Englishman's First Residence in Jamaica. By a Widow* (Ashton-under-Lyme: G. Orme, 1836), [3].

⁴⁴ For editors (other roles), see: BTW1032 (Elizabeth Broughton, for her mother Mary Blanckley); BTW1036 (Susanna Carlyle, for Joseph Carlyle); BTW1215 (Emilia Coxe for William Coxe); BTW1071 (Maria Graham, for Richard Bloxam); BTW1080 (Amelia Heber, for Reginald Heber); BTW1091 (Catherine Hutton, for various); BTW1140 (Elizabeth Prinsep, for Augustus Prinsep); BTW1208, 1209 (Mary Rich, for Claudius Rich); BTW1148 (Emma Roberts, for George White); BTW1155 (Mary Anne Schimmelpenninck, for Claude Lancelot); BTW1216 (Frances Trollope, for Thomas Anthony Trollope).

⁴⁵ See also BTW1008 (Lady Albanis Beaumont, by Christopher Lake Moody); BTW1045 (Louisa Demont, by Edgar Garston); BTW1019 (Charlotte Biggs, by John Gifford); BTW1075 (Harriet Gunn, by Dawson Turner); BTW1076 (Maria Guthrie, by Matthew Guthrie); BTW1124, 1125 (Maria Nugent, by Anon.); BTW1191 (Jane Vigor, by Anon.)

⁴⁶ Ann Radcliffe, *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, with a Return down the Rhine: to Which Are Added Observations during a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire, Westmoreland, and Cumberland* (London: Printed for G. G. and J. Robinson, 1795), [v].

⁴⁷ Mary Southall, *A Description of Malvern, and It's Concomitants; Including a Guide to the Drives, Rides, Walks and Excursions; with a Map of the Walks; a Panoramic Sketch of*

Objects from the Worcestershire Beacon, and Other Embellishments ([Stourport:] Printed for the Author, by G. Nicholson, 1822), vi.

⁴⁸ Carl Thompson, “Negotiating Gender and Genre in Women’s Travel Writing: Maria Graham’s *Journal of a Residence in Chile* (1824)”, Conf. on *New Horizons: Reassessing Women’s Travel Writing, 1660-1900*, Chawton House Library, 10-11 July 2014.

⁴⁹ Of the ten volumes in which Edinburgh publishers had shares, only six by four authors (Charlotte Eaton, Maria Graham, Elizabeth Sinclair, and possibly Maria Riddell) were printed in Edinburgh. One title, Elizabeth Broughton’s *Six Years Residence in Algiers* (1839), was printed in Edinburgh but published by Saunders & Otley in London.

⁵⁰ St Clair, *Reading Nation*, 555.

⁵¹ Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013), 180.